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C A T O Condemn'd: 1-6

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OR, THE  
Case *and* History  
OF  
SELF-MURDER,

Argu'd and Display'd at large,  
On the Principles of Reason, Justice, Law,  
Religion, Fortitude, Love of ourselves  
and our Country, and Example;

A Solution of this PROBLEM,  
*Whether a Man of Sense, Goodness, and Courage,  
ever did, or can, Kill Himself?*

Particularly calculat'd to prevent it in the  
ENGLISH Nation:

Occasion'd by a Gentleman of *Gray's-Inn* Stabbing  
Himself, in the Year 1730. and other Instances.

A Theological LECTURE, deliver'd at  
the ORATORY in *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields*.

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By J. HENLEY, M. A.

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*Publish'd at the Request of the Hearers.*

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L O N D O N:

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TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE  
Arthur Onslow, Esq;  
Speaker of the Honourable  
House of Commons,  
A conspicuous Master and Encourager of  
Reason and ERUDITION.

THIS  
LECTURE  
IS DEDICATED

By his most Obedient

AND

Middle Servant,



J. HENLEY.

No. 50. 1730.

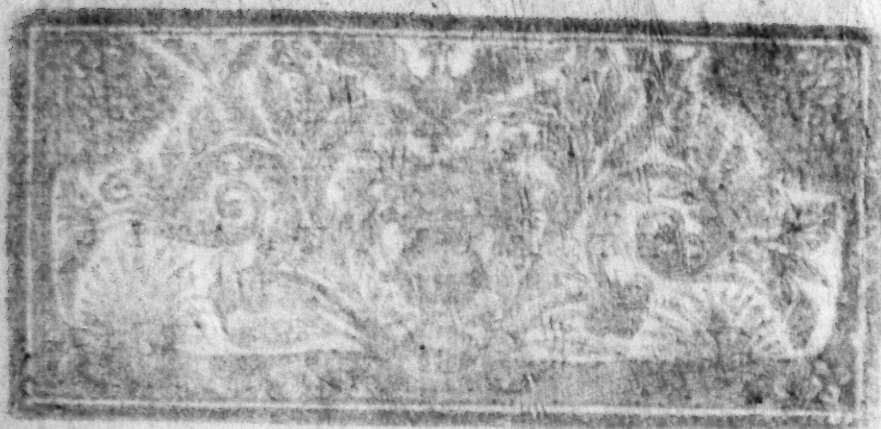


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Most Humble Servant,

Nov. 29. 1730.

J. HENLEY.





Let there not fail from the hands of  
 Good one that falleth on the sword.

**I**n this Court of Death on Good  
 and R. Race, after the Death  
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 MURDER. David makes use of this  
 With to express the utmost Detestation of

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2 S A M. iii. 29. Part of the Verse.

*Let there not fail from the house of  
Joab one that falleth on the sword.*

**I**T might be imagin'd, that this Curse of *David* on *Joab* and his Race, after the Death of *Abner*, was, in some measure, entail'd on the *British* Nation; there being scarcely an Account of publick Intelligence appearing that is not stain'd with a SELF-MURDER. *David* makes use of this Wish to express the utmost Detestation of

a most criminal and bloody Action; that it may be so far visited on the Posterity of him that committed it, as that some of them shall be perpetually falling on their own Swords, from one Generation to another. He places this amongst the most dreadful Instances of Divine Vengeance, implying, that in this Case, a Man is either left to himself, or given up to the judicial Wrath of Heaven, and the Tyranny of the destroying Angel.

The Question relating to the Guilt of Self-Murder has been variously agitated: It lies in this Proposition, Whether, on any Occasion, a Man has a Right to put a Period to his Life by his own Hands, or his own Procurement, wilfully and advisedly?

To resolve this Enquiry, it is to be consider'd, whether a Man can claim an absolute Property or Dominion over his own Life; that is, over Himself, independent of all the Laws, Divine and Human? For if he be subject to any Law, in this Article, that restrains his Right of acting in this Affair equally with others; that makes the Deed of depriving himself of Life unlawful.

It is agreed by all the Advocates of Self-Murder, That there is a supreme Being, who is the Creator and Cause of all Things: This

This is on all hands confess'd; as the Cause, Governor, and Judge of the Universe, That great and tremendous Being, the one only God, for ever blessed, must have the only supreme, original, absolute and independent Right over all his Creatures: He only is therefore the sovereign Proprietor of the Life of Man; and Man cannot, for that Reason, be originally at his own Disposal, or justly act as if he were independent, since he is, on the confess'd Principle above-mention'd, a dependent Being: So that he is under Limitations and Restraints, which if he breaks through, he behaves himself unlawfully, and offends his Maker, who alone is independent, and the Ruler of universal Nature.

God would cease to be Almighty, had he not a Power over all Things and all Persons: He would cease to be the sovereign Lawgiver, could he divest himself of his eternal Dominion and Right over the Life and Death of Man: nor could Man receive that Right; for he cannot, of himself, subsist a Moment, any more than he could make himself. Man has no independent Power over any Article of his Being: He cannot make a Grain of Corn, or digest it, as he pleases: Life continued is as much the Property of God, as Life bestow'd; so that to



cut it off by Self-Murder must be an Act of the greatest Injustice.

Life is call'd *the Gift of God*, because it is from his Free-Will and Goodness that it is begun and continued to Man, for his *Use* only: It is not the transferring of a Right over it; it is not the ceasing of God's Property in it, and the beginning of an absolute Property in Man over his own Life; for no Man can be one Moment in the full independent Possession of it, and therefore cannot be the absolute Proprietor of his own Life: He has a Right of Use over it, not of Propriety; a Power to employ it to that End for which he receiv'd it, and may therefore hazard, but not himself destroy it.

Life, like other Parts of the Creation, is made for some Purpose, directed to some End: This End has been assign'd to be the following of Reason, Virtue, Nature, or God: However, it cannot have been the Aim of Life, that it should be destroy'd; The true End of any Being must be to act according to the utmost of its Faculties; this is, properly, the following of Nature: The Faculties of Man are Knowledge and Free-will; the former is attained by the Exercise of Reason; the latter, complying with Vigor and Pleasure with what is reasonable, is Virtue; It is therefore the End  
or

or Design of human Life, to know and to pursue what is Rational.

But Self-Murder is an Opposition to that End, because it destroys Life itself, the only Means of obtaining it: It takes away all Reason and Virtue, and all the noble Trial and Satisfaction of them; so that on Principles of Nature itself, it must be deem'd utterly unlawful, because it is the Destruction of Nature, and defeats her Purposes of acting by Reason and Virtue.

Now if there be a certain End of Life, there must be certain Means of attaining that End, certain Rules, or Laws, which a Man is bound to observe in pursuit of it; not depending on his Choice or Consent, but annex'd to his Nature; the Destruction of which is therefore out of his lawful Power. All Laws suppose Reward and Punishment, otherwise they would be to no purpose; and therefore there must be some State, in which a Man must be accountable for the Use of Life, and punishable for its Misuse, much more for its Destruction.

God has, consequently, reserv'd to himself the Property of human Life, and that of Man is only a conditional Right of using it, to discharge his Duty; and there can be no possible Circumstances in which that Duty is capable of being cancell'd.

This

This the very *Pagan* Philosophers express'd in the strongest Language ; intimating that the Gods have a particular Care of us, and that Man is one of those things over which they have reserv'd to themselves a particular Propriety ; that no Man ought to quit his Station, without the express Command of his Superior, or desert the Post that God has assign'd him ; and that unless God himself sets him at liberty from that Body to which he has confin'd him, he can have no Entrance to that Place of Happiness and Glory, which is the Mansion of good Souls, and the Seat of departed Worthies.

And as Self-Murder is thus repugnant to the End for which our Nature was given us, and to that limited Right which we have over our own Lives, so it is opposite to the Duty of Man, consider'd as a Member of Civil Society : For that being instituted for the Security and Preservation of Life, to destroy it is the plain Reverse ; it breaks the best Measure of Justice, that of doing to others as we would be done to ourselves ; for if we may murder ourselves, we may soon be induc'd to think that of others is not unlawful ; it defeats the Force of human Laws ; for where is legal Punishment, if Self-Murder be warrantable ? it opposes the Reasons for which the Murder of others



is forbidden, as the having no Authority, depriving the State of a Subject, the Impossibility of making an equivalent Satisfaction.

Indeed, he that murders another may make some Satisfaction to the Publick by the Forfeiture of his own Life to the Law, and being a Terror to others; but the Self-Murderer evades all Reparation to the Publick, and gives Encouragement to others to do the like: And it shews itself farther pernicious to the Publick, in that it must either be an universal Right, equally extending to all Men for the same Reason, or none at all. But if all have this Right of Self-Murder, there can be neither Government nor Society; a Check will be put on all Affairs, Trust, and Commerce, since thus the strictest Ties may be eluded. Add to this, the Misery, Confusion, Shame and Desolation of Families, the Horror it creates, and the Aversion it causes, all inflaming Circumstances, that load the Sin of Self-Murder.

It likewise entirely disappoints the Principle of Self-Preservation, which God has placed in us to secure his Property over our Lives, for his own Glory, and our Duty. Life indeed, in itself, a-part from the End of Living, is a thing indifferent, and, on its own account, neither to be lov'd nor hated;

hated; the just Value or Contempt of it depends on its Use: A great Soul will neither value nor despise it, but as it is more or less consistent with his Duty: He will scorn to do an ill thing to save it, because that would destroy the very End for which he had Life, the doing well: Nor will he cast it away by Self-Murder; because to do well, which is the End of living, can never be out of his Power. To be covetous of Life, apart from its proper End, is Cowardice, to be profuse of it is Distraction.

There is always a Meanness of Spirit in an unreasonable Scorn of Life, and a Preference of Self-Murder to Pain: It is much greater to shew that we are sensible of Pain, and yet willing and resolute to bear it, rather than transgress our Duty. To die on that Motive is glorious: But a Scorn of living, separate from a Sense of Duty, is Frenzy; and the Virtue of dying, not the Act, is all its Merit.

It is a beaten Notion of the *Epicureans* and *Stoicks*, that Life is only a dull narrow Circle of the same Actions, and therefore is inconsiderable: *Lucretius* describes this Conceit, and *Seneca* applauds it. But they seem to forget that the Life of Man is a Progress in Understanding and Goodness; which is not a tasteless Round of the same

Actions,

Actions, but ever opens a new Scene to the Mind, and to the Conduct. The Life of Sense is indeed a dull Circle; but that of Reason and Virtue improves upon our hands, and makes us every Day wiser and happier. To discover a Truth which we knew not before; to do a laudable Action, for which we applaud ourselves within, and are applauded by all worthy Men; these have a Pleasure that makes Life valuable: To regulate and better our Thoughts and Measures, to do good to Mankind, to be grateful and dutiful to the Author of our Being, and for this to be raised to a State of unerring Reason, and consummate Virtue; this is a noble End of living: The Range of human Knowledge is boundless, and the Pleasure of being and of doing good is immortal.

Our Life is our Being; it is all that at present we have: They that have a more elevated Nature, as Angels, may charge ours with Imperfection; but for us to condemn our own Being, is unnatural: Self-Murder is a Disease peculiar to Man, and not to be discern'd in other Creatures.

These are the main Principles that make Self-Murder unlawful and unreasonable; from the Right which God has reserv'd to himself over human Life, from the End and Design for which Man receiv'd it, from



its Repugnance to Nature, the Good of Society, the Impulse of Self-Preservation, and the just Value which Life demands.

These Points of natural Reason are further enforc'd by the Law of God: *I kill, and I make alive*, says our Creator, *Deut. xxxii. 39.* He has the Power and Lordship of Life and Death: He sends us into this World, and expects our attending his Will to send us out of it: To do this ourselves is an Invasion of his Prerogative; to rush from our Place into the immediate Presence of our sovereign Lord, in the World of Spirits, must be Banishment eternal from that Presence, and Punishment without Mercy.

He that is uneasy or impatient under the Arrows of adverse Providence, who has not Firmness to stand the Shock of Pain or Sickness, nor Resolution to endure the Thoughts of Contempt and Poverty, has not true Presence of Mind.

The *Sixth Command* is levell'd against all Murder, of ourselves, as well as others; *Thou shalt not kill*: There is no Limit set to these general Terms, and therefore they are a Prohibition of Suicide, as well as other Murder; and St. *John* tells us, that *no Murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*: The Image of God is as much injured by Self-Murder as by that of our Neighbour; Society, and God himself, are as much injur'd  
by

## of SELF-MURDER. II

by one as by the other; And therefore the Prohibition stands with the same Force against both.

Our Saviour himself, when he had a Body prepar'd for him by the Father, and was sent into the World, seems to acknowledge that as Man he had no Power to lay it down, but by the Commandment of his Father. *John x. 18. I have power to lay down my life, this commandment have I receiv'd of my Father*: If Christ had not the Disposal of his Life without the divine Commission, no other can claim that Right.

Had this been lawful, all pious Persons in extreme Anguish of Mind or Body, all the Martyrs and Confessors, might have put an End to their Miseries by this short Method; and their Honours are vain, if they might have escap'd these Trials without Sin: *Elijah, Job, Jeremiah*, and others, wish'd to die, but did not indulge a Thought of procuring Death to themselves: They pray'd God to release them, but never dar'd to attempt their own Release: On the contrary, *Job*, who curs'd the Day of his Birth, resolv'd, *All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.*

They who are Self-Murderers in Scripture are Persons of the blackest Character; the Traytor *Ahitophel*; *Saul*, forsaken of God; *Zimri*, a wicked Prince; and *Judas*, who

betray'd our blessed Saviour. Good Men, tho' they might have the Temptation, yet we do not find comply'd with it. *Sampson* had a miraculous Aid, and therefore a divine Call, to destroy the *Philistines*; but that cannot be urg'd by others.

It was a Position of the *Stoicks*, of which Sect of Philosophers *Zeno* was the Head, and *Cato* and *Seneca* Members, "That it is consistent with Courage and the Virtue of Fortitude, for a Man to kill himself in an Hour of Extremity." This the Followers of *Plato* and *Aristotle* oppos'd.

The Misery of Pain or Body and Mind, (both of which may be equally tormenting) induc'd the unhappy Gentleman, the Subject of this Discourse, to conclude that he might lawfully bereave himself of a deplorable Life, (as *Job*, tho' unlawfully, wish'd for Death, and curs'd his Birth-Day) and his daily Wish was Death; he sought for it as a hid Treasure. He consider'd a long Affliction as a Yoke of Servitude on a free and generous Mind: It depriv'd him of the Relish of an easy Fortune, and a free Being; he endur'd it as a lingring Death, and thought it a more agreeable Choice to lose, in one comparative Point of Time, a Life that only lengthen'd his Agonies.

The Weight of his Spirit was brought low, and his Alacrity wither'd; the com-



mon Enjoyments of Nature were the Objects of his Abhorrence; he thought it a Work of Resolution and Valour to rescue himself from the Prison of the Body: He fortify'd himself in that evil Imagination by the Example of *Hannibal*, who took his Death in Poison from his Ring, before he would attend it from the *Roman* Lictors; of *Mithridates*, who prevented, by his own Sword, the Triumphs of *Pompey*, and the expected Cruelty of his own Son; of *Cato*, who would not wait to make an Addition to *Cæsar's* Trophies; of *Brutus* and *Cassius*, who prefer'd an immature End to the Bonds of Slavery; of *Nero*, who esteem'd it a Glory to escape the Hand of another by his own Fate; of *Calanus*, the *Indian* Philosopher, who, tortur'd with Anguish intolerable, fled from it into the Flames; of *Hercules*, and many others; who deliver'd themselves from Infamy or Distress, by a conceiv'd Bravery in Self-Murder.

This he would strengthen by the Example of the People of *Marseilles*, who kept publickly Poison mix'd with Hemlock, for those that explained, before the Senate, their Reasons for laying down Life, and quitted it; of the Matron in the Isle of *Ceos*, that would not experience a Change of her Prosperity; of *Cæsar*, who profess'd to envy the Action of *Cato*; of others, who thought

that a miserable Life was Death, and that the Body, broken with Sorrow, ought not longer to detain the Soul; of the eloquent *Nicias* and *Demosthenes*; of the wise *Chrysippus*, *Cleanthes*, *Zeno*, and *Empedocles*, who put a voluntary Bound to present Anguish.

He enforc'd it to himself by the Similes of escaping from a ruinous Building, and not drinking the Dregs of Life. These, and other Delusions of Fancy, or a distemper'd Reason, carry'd him, desperate, to seize the fatal Weapon, like *Cleomenes*, who cut off his Limbs, in Excess of Anguish, and, with Eyes wild as those of *Judas* in Despair, a Forehead wrinkled in Frowns, like a Wretch abandon'd by the Joy of the Holy Ghost, a disorder'd Countenance, and gnashing of Teeth, he became a Self-Tormentor to the Body that rack'd him, and contradicted *St. Paul's* Words, *That no man ever yet hated his own flesh*; as if one or two Wounds were not sufficient, more appear'd, as ghastly Mouths to witness his Calamity.

Thus, in the Shades of a direful Solitude, he languish'd in Streams of flowing Blood, darkling and harden'd, with none but the destroying Angel in the silent Mansion; a dreadful Companion; till a Glimmer of Light broke in from above, like Lightning in a Storm, on his benighted Understand-

derstanding, and a Voice whisper'd, That the Doctrine of the *Stoicks* had more Pomp than Weight; that Examples may mislead, and Authorities deceive us.

That a reasonable Creature is able to govern the unruly Disorders of his Heart, and Courage consists in bearing Pain, as well as exerting gallant Actions; that it is not so much Grief, as Impatience, not Torture, but Madness, not Pain, but Forgetfulness of himself, that is the Cause of this dishonourable Retreat from the Field of War; it is Desperation that converts Anger to Death.

Yet Pain has not been capable of extorting a Complaint from a *Scævola* or an *Attilius Regulus*, according to the receiv'd Narrative of him: Many have shone brighter in Adversity; they know the Honours of Fortune are uncertain, and her Sports are insolent. Thus *Horace*, when she stretch'd her Wing, resign'd what she gave, and wrapt himself in his own Virtue; But they who hate the Light, and cast away their Load, wish for the Miseries they avoided, and would exchange a painful Eternity for the Woe of a short Period.

Far more laudable is that Virtue that eases Vexation, makes the crooked Places straight, and the rough plain, than a desperate Fall under the Pressures of a wayward



ward Condition. *Belisarius* liv'd more gloriously in Want and Banishment, than *Orho* and *Nero* dy'd by their own Hands: *Dio-genes* was greater in despising and enduring Evil, than *Zeno* in submitting to, and flying from it: *Cato* was terrified at the severe Aspect of Calamity, and the Man sunk, as his Fears rose: *Cleomenes*, *Portia*, and *Arria*, could not sustain their Grief: There is a soft Weakness, a Cowardice, in not being able to make a Stand against the Insults of Misfortune; to smile only in the Shine, and weep in a Tempest. They dare not stay for the Blow, that die on the Threatning of it.

The Examples and Histories of those who would suffer all things, rather than lay violent hands on themselves, are more numerous than the Self-Murderers, and more considerable; Truth, not Men, is to be followed: The more intolerable Pain is, it will be of the shorter Continuance; and not the Steps of unenlighten'd Wretches but the Laws of God and of Reason are our Guide. It is a famous Instance of a Soldier under *Stephano Colonna*, that would not desert his Post on a Point undermin'd and fir'd, to teach a Constancy in observing the Will of our Lord. We are in a State of Trial: *Tully* introduces *Paulus Amilius* assuring *Scipio*, in a Dream, that he was

not to remove from Earth without Leave from Heaven. On the whole, Patience being a Part of Courage, and Self-Murder an Act of Impatience, a Dismay and Dejection of Mind, it follows, that none but Cowards, except the Lunatick, are or can be Self-Murderers, and that no couragious Man ever kill'd himself.

The Crown of all is the Conduct of Christ, who *endur'd the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right-hand of God.*

*Curtius* and *Cato*, *Brutus*, *Otho*, and others, are celebrated, as great Hero's: But a Christian cannot quote a Heathen to justify what the Scripture forbids. The Pagans abounded in false, as well as great Sentiments; and were under the Influence of irregular and mistaken Motives. *Curtius*, in a superstitious Manner, according to the Principles of those Times, devoted himself to Death, for his Country. *Cato's* Death was a Mixture of Pride and Impatience: the Self-Murder of the rest turn'd upon the like Principles.

But the common Motives, at present, are mean and contemptible, in comparison. Should the Ghost of *Cato* and *Brutus* be acquainted, That there is a Country where Men deliberately dispatch themselves on a slight Disappointment, a Weariness of Life, a Fear of Poverty, an imaginary Pang, a

Fit of the Spleen; they would despise it, and be uneasy to be made Precedents for so mean an Imitation.

And yet this Justice must be done the *Heathen* World, that the Laws of their States, and the Reasonings of their best Philosophers, condemn'd this Practice, as a rash forsaking of the Station in which the Providence of their Gods placed Mankind; and their Expressions are numerous and strong against it.

That evil and cruel Spirit, who was a *Murderer from the beginning*, is eminently gratified with the Commission of this Sin: Thus he tempted our blessed Lord, *Cast thy self down*; but he repell'd him with Indignation, and left us an Example; *The hour in which his Father had appointed him to yield up his life, was not yet come.*

It should likewise be consider'd, that if it be lawful for a Man to murder himself, it would, with his Consent, be lawful for another to murder him: but it is not lawful for another to do it, and therefore not for himself. It should be remark'd, that there are many Practices forbidden by God, as injurious to our Bodies, which yet are less pernicious in their Consequences than Self-Murder; Intemperance, Gluttony, Drunkenness, Uncleanliness; these are Sins against the Body, which is call'd *the Temple of the Holy Ghost*,



*Ghost, and if any man defiles it, him will God destroy.* He therefore that destroys that Temple, must be more obnoxious to the divine Anger than are all the Excesses and Irregularities of Appetite and Passion, that tend to the Ruin of our Nature.

What may confirm this Argument of the utter Unlawfulness of Self-Murder, is, its Contradiction to that Patience, that Dependence on the Providence of the Almighty, that Trust and Hope, that Resignation and Submission, which are due to God, our supreme Governor. If he tries us with a Delay of Answer to our Prayers, with Pain, Calamity, or private Affliction, it is breaking away from his Hand in an unwarrantable manner; it is renouncing that Surrender we have made of ourselves to God, and contrary to that Devotion which Christianity requires of all its Professors. Afflictions are Trials of Obedience for future Reward; this is a Refusal of those Trials, and a Rebellion against the great Judge, which cannot expect Favour or Absolution from him; but must be deem'd a just Sacrifice of divine Wrath, and for ever unworthy the Grace of Pardon.

The next Step proper to be taken, after having establish'd the Unlawfulness of Self-Murder, on Principles both of natural and reveal'd Religion, is to examine some spe-

cious Pretences that have been urg'd in defence of it.

The Cases of *Abimelech*, *Jonah*, and the rest of that kind in Scripture, are extraordinary, and, as such, cannot be drawn in to Precedent: But in the *Apocrypha*, we find mention of *Rasis*, who chose rather to die manfully than to come into the Hands of the Wicked, to be abus'd otherways than be seem'd his noble Birth.

This does not seem a deliberate Act of *Rasis*, but the sudden Effect of a Surprize, on the Apprehension of Death unavoidable from his Enemies that surrounded him: He might possibly have been like many others, mistaken as to the Gallantry of Self-Murder: But he is only describ'd, as to his own Sentiments, and is not expressly applauded for the Action; nor is his Conduct on this Head reconcilable to his Duty and Religion, nor, therefore, capable of being justified.

It has been urg'd, That such Mortifications of the Body as even impair the Health, are looked upon as Acts of Piety; and therefore the voluntary Hurt or Destruction of the Body may be warranted. But the Supposition is false; no Austerities are allowable that impair the Health: The Christian Religion does not require them as Marks of Devotion, but rather forbids such bodily Exercise; which not only profiteth  
little,

little, but is hurtful to the Mind, by the Disorder it causes in the animal Constitution. Fasting, Temperance, Self-Denial, judging ourselves, are all to be govern'd by the Rules of Health, and are sinful if they disserve it.

Nor are we allow'd, as some have argu'd, to chuse any natural Evil, in itself, but only to avoid a greater; as in the Amputation of a Limb, to prevent a Mortification: But no natural Good can be an Equivalent for the Loss of Life itself; and therefore there is no Foundation for the Parallel.

*Joh. x. 11.* it is said, *The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep*; but if our Lord be meant by *the good shepherd*, it is a Case peculiar to himself, and cannot authorize any other Person: If *the good shepherd* be any other Pastor of the Church, it is not imply'd, that he may be the Instrument of his own Death, but that he will hazard and employ his Life for his Flock, rather than they shall receive a Spiritual Injury.

Another Text is urg'd, *John xv. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend*. This does not import, that a Man may murder himself for his Friend, which would be absurd; but that if he exposes his Life to such Hazards in his behalf as may be attended with Death, he gives the highest Proof of his Friendship,



ship, as our Lord died for Mankind. This is foreign to the Point of Self-Murder, which is not hazarding Life in a just Cause, but depriving ourselves of it. — So *laying down our lives for the brethren*, and — *for a good man one would even dare to die*, are to be understood in the same Sense, of risking our Safety to secure our Friend, as a Proof of the utmost Sincerity and Affection to him.

If the Examples of the *Greeks, Romans*, and others, that practis'd this Crime, to serve their Country, release themselves from Suffering, or any other Motive, be pleaded, it is answer'd, we have a Law, that *Evil is not to be done, that good may come of it*: The Action is always, in its own Nature, sinful, and no Circumstance can justify it.

Poverty, hard Circumstances, Disgrace, a vexatious Disappointment, are sometimes introduc'd to favour Self-Murder: But the Impatience of Poverty is Pride, and want of Submission to the Will and Providence of God, and few industrious frugal Men can plead this Motive. God has promis'd, that *they who seek him, shall not want any good thing*: And when eternal Misery is in balance, none who has Fore-thought, or the Exercise of his Reason, will, to avoid present, expose himself to eternal Misery.

Disgrace,

Disgrace, if undeserv'd, is no Pretence; but will, by a firm Mind, be despis'd; and the Memory of Self-Murder is a Blot, more lasting in the Name than any present Infamy; besides the everlasting Shame and Contempt to which the Offender will rise at the great Day. If an Infamy be unhappily deserv'd, it may be lessen'd, or worn off by better Conduct, but not by this Sin: This is an Addition to it, and supposes the Mind not capable of supporting itself under a Remorse caus'd by its own Failure: It therefore not only fixes, but adds to the Ignominy; and, as it is not only a Sin, but a Resolution not to repent, and submit to God, it is doubly unpardonable.

*Vexation* has been written on all the World, long before any Mortal at present living was born: This Lesson has been taught by Experience, in every Age: The Hopes of others have been blasted, and their fairest Blessings wither'd in their Hands: But there are some Comforts left to the Uneasy; and Time and Patience may lighten the present Misery; the Wound may not be incurable; there is still Balm on Earth, and a Physician in Heaven.

In the Hands of God are all the Springs of Life, all the Blessings of Time, and of Eternity: His Presence will fill the Vacancy, and ease the Soul: Instead of the En-  
joy-

joyments that have forsaken and disappointed you, he can give you an Interest in his Promises, his holy Covenant, in the Riches of his Grace, and the Inheritance of his Glory: These are Hopes that will never vanish, and leave us empty; he has all the Stores of Nature in his Hand, and all the Comforts of Life; he can answer the Losses we mourn, and turn the Stream of our Thought into such a peaceful Channel as shall make us forget our Sorrows.

But there is yet a more awful Argument; God is not to be disobey'd, nor is Eternity to be mock'd: The loss of a temporal Good is poorly recompens'd by endless Evil, the Ocean, the Abyss of Woe, the flying into that World that is under the unchangeable Curse of God.

Captivity, a Prison, a Sentence of Death, a languishing Life in extreme Torments, an imminent Peril, are also made Pretences for this Sin. Thus, besides other Instances, the Heathen Goaler, *Acts xvi. 27.* would have kill'd himself, lest he should have been put to death, in the room of his Prisoners: But these are not Precedents for Christians to follow: The holy Prophets and Martyrs had the most dreadful Sufferings in view, and yet they rather trusted to divine Grace for Support under them, than indulg'd a guilty Method of Escape; and



their Names are crown'd with Honour, on Earth, and in Heaven.

*Job* was a Monument of Misery; his Soul, his natural Inclination, chose Strangling, and Death, rather than Life; yet he surviv'd his Sorrows, and became a glorious Example of Patience, and of the divine Mercy.

It is a solemn Caution of our Lord, *Fear not them who kill the body, and can do no more; but fear him, who can destroy both body and soul in Hell.* Though we see no Way open for Relief, yet the infinite Wisdom of *GOD* may open a Door of Escape: He can heal the most deplorable Maladies; he can give Ease to the acutest Pains; he can change thy captive and forlorn Estate into Peace, Liberty, and Joy: Remember the happy End of *Job*; of *Daniel*, among fierce Savages; the Deliverance of *Peter* and *Paul* out of Prison: *GOD* can give thee a Dismission from Life with his own Hand; he can arm thy Soul with divine Courage and Strength, to bear up under the sharpest Agonies, and to glorify Him, even in the Fires; and surely, such a Death, in the certain Favour of *GOD*, is infinitely to be prefer'd before a Death procur'd to ourselves, and under the Curse of Heaven.

Another Pretence for Self-Murder is, Distress of Soul, through surrounding Sorrows,

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within

within and without; the Departure of God, the Agonies of Conscience, and the Fears of eternal Damnation. These are often the Springs of Temptation to Self-Murder: Life, under such Anguish, is insupportable; and this was the Case of *Saul* and *Judas*, when God had departed from them.

But God has not told any particular Sinner, that he has utterly left him: He calls him to *look unto him from the ends of the earth*, from the Borders of Hell and Despair, *that he may be saved*; but Self-Murder will for ever seal and confirm the Sentence of Condemnation; it is a Sin against the Grace of God, that admits of no Repentance, and forbids the Son of God to save us. The Punishment hereafter will be the greater, according to the Heinousness, Aggravation, and Impenitence of the Sin, and the Torment more intolerable.

Deceitful is the Hope, that the Anguish of Mind, under this Temptation, will lighten the Imputation: *David* had no Opinion of this Delusion; *If*, says he, *I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: When you make many prayers, says God, in Isaiah i. 15. I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.* There cannot be a greater Impiety than to pray for the Pardon of a wilful, intended Sin, before it is committed; it is the most deliberate Offence

to

to GOD, and debars the Supplicant of all Access to the Throne of Grace.

Self-Murder is likewise thought to be often suggested by Satan, or necessitated by wicked Thoughts, distracting Fears and Imaginations, that afford no Rest: But as to mourn, hate, and resist these Thoughts, will clear the Soul of the Imputation of them; so if they be indulg'd, they are guilty; if comply'd with, the Guilt is aggravated, and no Space left for Repentance, nor Grace to practise it.

Better it is to wrestle against these Disturbances of Mind, by dwelling on some sacred Sentence of the Word of GOD: Preferable it is to bear the Fatigue of this Combat, to strive against these Assaults; lest the Soul at once be sent into the Region of utter Darkness, where there will be no Rest, or Relief, and every Pang will be more hopeless and terrible. This Conflict cannot be long, but the Triumph is eternal. God will not always suffer the Adversary to contend with Man, *lest the spirit fail before him, and the soul which he has made, be lost for ever.*

Great is the Dishonour cast on our Nation, as furnishing more Examples of this sort of Violence, than any other, tho' much



larger: But the Honour of Religion is something fav'd in it, by the national Reproach arising chiefly from our Climate, Diet, natural Liberty, a Spirit of Heaviness and Discontent, our Complexion, or Humour, and Way of living. A Physician may sometimes be a good Preservative against the Inclination to Self-Murder; and an *Englishman* ought peculiarly to guard against two great Foibles, being obstinate and dissatisfy'd. All our Prudence and Zeal, our Reason and Religion, walking in the Ways of God with Stedfastness, and pouring out our constant Prayers for his preventing and assisting Grace, must be employ'd; that his Fear may be ever before us, and no Temptations to such Impiety may prevail upon us.

We are inform'd, that when *Ahitophel* had executed himself, he was buried in the Sepulchre of his Father: *Josephus*, in After-times, tells us, That if any among the *Jews* kill themselves, it is decree'd, That till the Sun go down they shall be unbury'd; as if Self-Murder was to be accounted a Deed of Darkness, and treated accordingly.

Among the *Greeks*, *Aristotle* says, it was generally decreed, That the dead Bodies of Self-

Self-Murderers should be disgrac'd, by denying them Burial. Among us, such as lay violent hands upon themselves are likewise deny'd Christian Burial, as not dying with the Faith of Christ, and Repentance: And formerly the Civil Government appointed, that they should be put into the Earth, and a Stake driven through them, which was not to be remov'd, as a lasting Mark of Infamy. A Jury-man ought to attend the Verdict of his own Conscience; for Self-Murder is not commonly the Effect of Lunacy.

Among the Ancients, as to the History of this Question, they who chiefly maintain'd this Act to be lawful, were the *Stoicks*: The Arguments they us'd for it have already been answer'd. There was a Pride in their Philosophy, by which they endeavour'd to make their wise Men independent, even of the Gods themselves.

The System of the *Stoicks* was brought among the *Romans* by *Panetius*; and with them Self-Murder came in, chiefly under *Marius* and *Sylla*; the Luxurious and Cowardly, as well as the Grave, sought for Ease in it: Under *Augustus's* peaceful Reign it lost Ground; but under *Tiberius*, and his Successors, it again prevail'd; and the Writings of three eminent *Stoicks*, *Epictetus*, *Seneca*, and

and *Antoninus*, made it appear with some Recommendation.

Courage, Honour, and Liberty, were the chief Pagan Motives for Self-Murder; But the Reason of all these Motives fails; for it is not Courage, but Cowardice, or Desperation; it is not Honour, but the contrary both to Virtue and Applause; it is not Liberty, but a real Slavery to a Man's own Passion, instead of a Release from an imaginary Subjection to Pain or Calamity.

Several Examples of this Crime might here be answer'd, and the Laws and Customs of many Countries, in relation to it, produc'd; but nothing can be brought from hence to prove it natural; and all the particular Objections branching from those already mention'd and satisfy'd, are clear'd in their general Principles; which being prov'd false, the Consequences of them are delusive.

The Means to secure ourselves against this Temptation, are, To maintain on our Spirits a constant Sense of the crying Sin of Murder itself; to love nothing in this World so much, as that the loss of it should throw us off our Guard; to keep a strict Watch on all the ruffling and disquieting Passions of human Nature; to be temperate,  
sober,



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sober, and virtuous; to beware of such Sins as may provoke God to leave us to this Evil, as Pride, Self-confidence, a worldly Mind, Unbelief, all heinous Crimes, and Backsliding from God and Goodness; to repel Melancholy, endeavour to be always employ'd; discover to others the Temptations we are under, and resist them; be frequent in Prayer to God; but to avoid too much Solitude, and to rectify the animal Constitution.

We ought likewise to caution ourselves against the Approaches to this Sin, as Intemperance, refusing Advice, or the Means of Health; all imminent Hazards of Life, or Circumstances of voluntary Danger, and Bloodshed.

By these Methods this Sin will be prevented: We are to reflect, that we are not the Lords, but the Tenants only of these Tabernacles, in which our immortal Spirits are ordain'd to dwell for a Season, accountable for the Use of them to the sovereign Proprietor: And when we violate the Laws of God, without a Possibility of Repentance, we throw ourselves out of his Favour.

Let us therefore improve these tragical Occurrences to our own Benefit; pity those who

who are subject to fatal Passions, and watch against them; entrust our Lives and Souls to the keeping of the Almighty, and pray that he would send forth his Light and Truth to rescue and heal a sinful World, and preserve us from those Paths that lead to present and eternal Self-Destruction.

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